

# SOCIAL ACTION

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HERE AND THERE	A. L.	405
SOCIAL MEDICINE	A. LAHURI	409
THE BELGIAN FARMERS' UNION	M. VAN DEN BOGAERT	419
WHAT IS CAPITALISM ?	A. FONSECA	428
BOOK REVIEWS	A. L.	438
SOCIAL SURVEY	E. GATHIER	440

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## HERE AND THERE

### *Pacific Co-existence*

For years on end, day in day out, the Kremlin told us that it was all for peace. Such persistent effort reminds one of the Assistant Predestinator in Huxley's *Brave New World* who said: "Four hundred repetitions three nights a week for four years — 62,400 repetitions — make one truth.... Statements which 62,400 repetitions have made people accept are taken not merely as true but as axiomatic, self-evident, utterly indisputable".

Unhappily or rather happily, one remembers other communist statements that communists are all out for world revolution, and world imperialism. Such statements are reserved for the elite and are not repeated 62,400 times for the public. Red world imperialism is the goal and ideal of the Soviet ; the means may change, the path may be a wild zigzag, the goal does not change. In course of time the Reds might give up orthodox communism, but as long as they do not give solid proofs of a change of heart, they should be treated neither as friends nor as foes, but as philosophers that have gone astray ; and such people are the hardest to handle.

*Straw in the Wind*

A few weeks ago the Nepalese Communist Party passed a resolution "that Indian intervention" in the internal affairs of Nepal should cease at once; that the 1950 Treaty which regulates the relations between India and Nepal is derogatory to Nepal's sovereignty, and that in consequence the Indian military mission be withdrawn, Indian personnel in check-posts recalled and the "unequal treaties" abrogated.

The Nepalese Praesidium glories in honorary members like Mao Tse Tung, Malenkov, Ho Chi Minh; it is presumably bound by the discipline and rules of the Cominform and the party is a branch of the Communist Party of India. Hence one is led to admit that the Nepalese demands reflect the directives of the Cominform.

It all means that in Red eyes India's influence in Nepal is on a par with America's in what are called imperialist colonies. Logically such countries have to be "liberated".

One must also note that K. I. Singh, the runaway leader of the Nepalese Communist Party, was recently feted officially in Peking, and it is said that a "liberation army" is being formed in West Nepal with headquarters in Tibet. The present campaign against Indian influence in Nepal is meant to prepare a suitable public opinion. Rumour has it that in the near future Red propaganda will claim back the Indian territories conquered from Nepal by the British; this would be implied in the claim for Greater Nepal. The claim, however, has not yet been repeated 62,400 times.

*Mind the Pockets*

India is bent on streamlining her sea-coasts and suppressing foreign pockets. The Premier of Ceylon

on the contrary said he was not averse to a well-lined British pocket and "wanted British bases in 'Ceylon against a possible invasion from South-India if it turned communist". Mr. Attlee denounced Formosa (not Hong-Kong, mind) as an ugly pocket.

The newly voted Chinese constitution provides for representatives from the Chinese communities overseas; would a Chinese pocket in Calcutta please Sardar K. M. Pannikar, the chairman of the States Delimitation Commission?

Some Indians overseas would not object to Indian pockets in Africa; but our Government is turning a stone-deaf ear to such whispers.

### *Streamlining*

Once upon a time it was taken for granted that the Prime Minister had to do the hardest bits of work. Things are changing. The Prime Minister had done a tough job when streamlining the dress of our officials: coat and pants, no tie, no swallow tails. The Home Minister has gone one better: he tried his hand at streamlining the conduct of officials: no loose threads, no bulging pocket.

The new rules for the All-India services should give us an austere administration: no bigamy, not even marriage for women officials, no recourse to court or to press to vindicate an official action, no money speculation, no private business over Rs. 1,000 (by an official or anyone of his family), no acceptance of gifts except trifles (the maximum trifle is Rs. 20 from an outsider, Rs. 50 from a friend, Rs. 200 from an intimate). For any departure from the above rules, due permission must be obtained from the Home Minister

who will sanction the legality, if not the morality, of the exception. But in no case whatever, any political activity, or any criticism of government; these are sins without remission.

The Home Minister is out to purify the administration; his henchmen in the Hindu Mahasabha might well turn to this new field of activity and turn away from irresponsible missionary-baiting.

### *A Matter of Balance*

Dr. Katju was at his best in Parliament when countering a communist protest against the ban on the sale of Soviet literature in railway stalls. "What is happening to the sale proceeds? Where do the profits go?". At the expected uproar, he went on: "When my friends, (the comrades) are infuriated, it means the thing is substantially true and that there is no answer except shouting. When a man offers me millions of books that would cost five rupees each for nine annas, I am a little suspicious".

What was unexpected was that a Congress member pleaded to have the ban removed: "Let us have balance in our politics and literature". Apparently in his mind a balanced diet means a fair amount of rice, and an equally fair amount of datura. Has he not understood the present view of the Congress party? To be on speaking terms with communist foreigners is one thing, to take them home as cooks is another.

At the next elections, will the Congress High Command show such balanced judgment as to check on the ideological balance of its members and chuck out unbalanced candidates?

A. L.

## SOCIAL MEDICINE

Like all living beings, man lives in his surroundings, through them and at times in spite of them. It is his privilege, which sets him apart from other living beings, to be able not only to adapt himself to his surroundings but to adapt his surroundings to himself. It is on this background that one is tempted to make a popular survey of what man does to protect his life under the guidance of medical research.

The world population is roughly estimated at 2,300 millions; out of the total about two-thirds have a short span of life (about 27 years in India and China, 37 in South-America). Worse still, this very short span is made miserable with disease, malaria, tuberculosis etc. Possibly close to two-thirds of mankind are afflicted with more or less dangerous diseases. They are ill-protected against outside enemies, virus, microbe, parasite, and whilst they are ill-protected, their constitution is impaired with insufficient or deficient diets which favour scurvy, pellagra, ricketts, beri-beri etc. Finally those two-thirds of the world population are without self-defence against climate and weather. Are those masses without hope or help? Are they a prey to some biological or physiological factor or other which plagues their existence?

Even among the one-third who seem to be better off, strange diversities in life expectation and tone of life are noticeable, (infant mortality, death rate, etc).

One difference between countries and regions is due to a disparity in medical services: one doctor for 800 people, in the U.S.A., one for 1,600 in France, for

12,000 in Ceylon, for 100,000 in India, for 175,000 in Ethiopia.

Another source of different conditions is food; undernutrition is cured with an improved diet. But food resources are strangely distributed. Western Europe which covers three per cent of the earth's surface and shelters fifteen per cent of the population produces thirty-two per cent of the world's foodstuffs. With North America we have 12 per cent of the land, 6 per cent of the population and 25 per cent of the foodstuffs; in Africa 25 per cent of the land, 6 per cent of the population, and 3 per cent of the food. In Asia the percentages are 10 for land, 45 for the population and 17 for the world's food production.

If we take 2,750 calories as the daily requirement of an adult, we note that one-third of mankind have something over this amount, one-sixth something between 2,750 and 2,250, calories and more than half of mankind has less, even much less. The major part of Asia, part of the Middle East, and Central America and the major part of Africa are put in this last category. On the other hand a high caloric level may well go with an ill-balanced diet; *v.g.* in North America or Scandinavia, cereals supply only 1,000 calories, whilst milk and meat consumption is above normal, and over 50 grammes of proteins are from animal sources. But in other lands reaching the level of 2,000 calories, half came from cereals but little appears as proteins from animal origin (4 grammes in Java) and everywhere the vitamin content is insufficient. The balance in diet is important, as was noted by the French Institute of Public Hygiene during the war by comparing the calorie and protein content of the diet

and the mortality as observed in the rationed cities and the countryside. (Evidently due caution must be exercised when calculating or handling what is called an average national diet).

One may conclude that scientific observations have confirmed the common sense (is it really so common ? ) that there is a clear nexus between being fed and being alive, between being well fed and keeping well alive, and also between being well fed and working well. At their Bangalore meeting last year the F.A.O. experts agreed that "mal-nutrition is still the most acute problem in Asia and the Far East". Under-nutrition, mal-nutrition, all diet deficiencies influence health, productivity and also, this should be noted by social workers, the spirit of cooperation and the tone of social life.

That men are equal or born equal is said only after an effort at metaphysics ; it is obvious that in the matter of diet, clothing and shelter, nations, regions and families differ widely ; men are glaringly unequal in the face of death.

A second fact is the varied rate of growth in the world population. At the time of Akbar it had reached some 550 million ; it grew at a uniform rate for two centuries and then from the eighteenth and even more so from the nineteenth century it increased rapidly. Before the reader will have come to the end of this article, there will be a few thousand more babies alive.

The growth in numbers varies with births and also with a prolongation in the life-span. Some 150 years ago, in France life-expectation was what it is now in

India and infant mortality as high as in to-day's Calcutta, but in the last half-century life-expectancy increased by 30 years. One may say that conditions in ill-favoured countries are not unavoidable. Life in India is not short, it is shortened by insufficient and defective nutrition. Since medicine takes its stand on the side of life (barring the scientific criminals in some maternity clinics), medicine is called upon to fight for life against disease and ill-nutrition.

The fight against disease can be spectacular. In the eighteenth century, we had Jenner and vaccination against small-pox; in the nineteenth Pasteur and a new idea of infectious diseases, Laveran and the study of blood viruses, Ronald Ross and the observation of microbe-carriers; in the twentieth, we note the manufacture of chemico-therapeutic drugs, the discovery of antibiotics, and then a methodical war between man and other living beings.

This war registers splendid victories. For centuries Europe had known recurrent epidemics of cholera and plague. In 1851 an international conference studied measures against the epidemics but the conference was without results because the measures would have hampered international trade and business profits. It took several epidemics to rouse international opinion and we had to wait till 1893 for a new conference to set a series of suitable measures, and till 1901 for another series covering other infectious diseases. The work of Pasteur and Koch had supplied concrete means of combating epidemics and the governments dared no more refuse their co-operation. At the



same time a sense of public hygiene developed ; medicine is concerned not only with individuals but with groups ; hence public hygiene which is the technique of public health can tackle common diseases of which the causes, agents and cure are known ; bacteriology, biochemistry, pharmacology supply guns and munitions for this war. Cooperation has extended to the international scale. In 1951 cholera broke out in Egypt, and would, as in the past, have invaded Europe and Asia ; thanks to the cooperation of international institutions, the epidemic was choked on the spot.

Disease is not only combatted, it is also prevented. Vaccination is available against many diseases and happily replaces the old quarantine which is hardly possible in war-time and in an air-minded period. In that line the World Health Organisation has done a gigantic work, particularly against malaria and tuberculosis. Man is becoming aware of his powers against illness and nations who cannot agree among themselves can at least begin by agreeing against insects and microbes.

For the present, co-operation is more frequent and positive on a regional or national scale. Proud cities like "Bombay the Beautiful" or Calcutta "the City of Palaces" are awake to their squalid spots and like all large cities develop collective hygiene ; not only water-works which by supplying drinkable water automatically prevent typhoid, but rat-killing campaigns which diminishes plague ; slum clearance which is one of the most urgent problems of modern cities and nations. Even the measures against tubercular infection which are still in their first stages show encouraging results.

Medical science is not only waging a defensive and offensive war against disease ; it is beginning an out-flanking movement by clearing the way to rational nutrition ; the operation is entrusted to physiology and biochemistry.

People were always keen on eating, even on eating much, but it is only little by little, after many mistakes and delusions that they tried to know what to eat. It was taken for granted that one had to live before philosophizing, but surely more thought went to philosophizing than to the art of eating and living. A change occurred only in the eighteenth century when the first step was taken with Lavoisier. Nutrition began to be defined : replenishing the reserves of the organism so as to maintain a desirable equilibrium. Defined also were the losses, therefore the needs in physical terms (calories). Defined also the restorative values of foodstuffs in calories.

The second step came in the following century : physiologists discovered that the human body is built up of the same chemical elements as other bodies, elements which cannot be produced by the organism but have to be supplied from foods, and they started drawing up a list of elements and their corresponding sources of supply.

The third step was in modern times. Scientists made a further discovery : the body is not a perfect chemist, and cannot, even when supplied with the necessary elements, fabricate the most vital molecules. These must be supplied ready-made : vitamins, fatty and amic acids. That was the discovery that led to easy remedies against beri-beri, scurvy, pellagra.

In 1935 the Director of the Hygiene Commission of the League of Nations circularised physiologists to enquire into the social importance of the new-born science of nutrition. The enquiry covered developed and underdeveloped countries. Lord Boyd Orr, later director of the F.A.O., reported that half the population of pre-war England suffered from ill-nutrition, forty per cent from specific deficiencies and ten per cent from general deficiency. Even in the U.S.A. which is considered the best-fed country of the world, the Selective Services found that out of fourteen million people examined, only some two million adequately met the required standards. It was after two years of study that the Special Food Commission could list the "Geneva Norms" tabulating all the requisites of a well-balanced diet : carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins, fats and amino-acids, the sixteen metals and thirteen metalloids always present in living matter and also the seven other metals occasionally present.

The list should allow us to calculate what is needed for a family, for a nation, for the world ; it should also help us to plan world-agriculture. The scientist can pass the order, the peasant will execute it. Instead of warring among ourselves or of preparing against an invasion of Martians, let us join the actual battle against an inner enemy : hunger.

First the problem of sufficient and suitable soil : reclamation, irrigation, cultivation, etc. Then improvement of crops, by suitable protection and nutrition ; supplying not only the three main fertilizers (phosphate, potassium and nitrogen), but also manganese, iron and trace elements ; improvement also by cross-

breeding (which method increased maize production three-fold in thirty years, sugarcane five-fold etc.) Storage and protection against pests are also well advanced.

In animal breeding technical progress is quite satisfactory (protection, raising of young ones, improvement in type and variety). Their diet is also attended to, with deficiencies made up with elements (calcium, phosphates, iron etc.) added to the pasture or to the rations. Selection, cross-breeding and artificial insemination increase production in milk, meat and by-products. (In New Zealand selection and cross breeding raised butter production up to 35 per cent, better feeding brought it up to 61 per cent). If improvements are so remarkable in some countries, why are they so slow in others? Mr. A. Mayer<sup>1</sup> blames it on poverty. Poverty works in a vicious circle: it fosters ill-nutrition and disease; disease and ill-nutrition in their turn foster poverty; from which arises the duty of favoured nations to assist underdeveloped countries. In any case or any country, the task of feeding the world cannot be left to the peasant; the very best is unequal to the work. Science, many sciences must be mobilised to discover what is being done, what is to be done, how it can best be done; organisation must be set up, managers, engineers, peasants, etc. must be brought together so that there be a fair hope that world needs will be satisfied.

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<sup>1</sup> Facts and figures of this article are mostly taken from A. Mayer's study in *Dossiers de l'Action Soc. et Relig.* May 1953, and from de Castro's *Geography of Hunger*.

Too long has man followed his instincts in the struggle for survival or for the good life ; it is high time he should make use of another natural resource at his disposal, namely his reason, his knowledge, his power of discovery and invention. The life of our slum dwellers depends on the invention of a gadget or other, on the discovery of bacteria or moulds by one or other student of Asia, Europe or America. Solidarity is growing tighter and tighter in so personal a matter as health. In this vast social movement, the share of the biologist, physiologist, doctor etc. is becoming greater and greater.

Outstanding among all others, is the role to be played by the medical man. The doctor is the interpreter of the suffering that comes to man from his inner and outer enemies ; the doctor is the one who has taken charge of man's life. Ever since medicine became a body of scientific knowledge, the doctor has been conscious of his role and duty. The latest discoveries in the field of health are wonderful, and call for the admiration of all other scientists. The possibilities of medical science are the possibilities of the doctor ; he is always the healer ; he must go on spying out the diseases, and stamping them out ; nowadays he must also prevent them.

His role in society is no more limited to the care and cure of individuals ; he is to look after groups, cities, after nations, after mankind. From a healer he has grown into a hygienist on a world-scale ; this demands that ample room be made for him in any national planning. The food problem for instance cannot be solved in tons of rice and wheat ; the food problem is a problem of both quantity and quality,

it is the problem of a national balanced diet, hence it cannot be solved without health specialists.

Moreover, scientific advance demands the creation of industries, the organisation of industrial areas ; it supposes new jobs and men for the new jobs. Here again the doctor must come in. He has to follow man through life, (infant, child, adolescent, adult) in all its aspects, (anatomy, physiology, psychology); he has to follow him in the home, the school, the factory and office. He must judge of his aptitudes for different jobs. He must judge and control sanitation and hygiene of any work and place of work. He might, if the suggestion be not unduly bold, check the environment and routine of legislative bodies, and make sure that the members, elected after a sound vocational examination, find nothing in Parliament to upset their emotional balance or to hamper the supremacy of intelligence and judgement. Everywhere the doctor should be a guide and helper of man and mankind.

The doctor's task is vital, his power enormous. But what is crucial in that task and power is the direction he should give. Medicine and hygiene are forces ; in a force the direction is no less important than the magnitude and point of application. Hence the responsibility of the medical man in choosing the direction of social development. More than others, he should have sound ideas on the purpose of society, its conditions and progress ; as society is made of men, the doctor should have sound ideas about man's purpose in life, the direction towards the best self. In other words, a doctor should be doubled with a philosopher. He must visualise man not only as a consumer or a producer, not only as a

clever animal, a clever technician, a good soldier, but also as a being made of body and soul, as a good citizen, as a loyal family man, as God's true child.

A. Lahuri

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## THE BELGIAN FARMERS' UNION

Modern India is looking out for new ways and methods to solve the huge problems it is facing in the economic and social sphere. Government Officials, good-will missions, organizations which are technically well organized, are all looking out for a spirit by which they may be informed, and for sound ethical principles, on which to base their activities. Examples taken from other countries will be welcome.

It is about one of these examples that we will now speak. The Belgian Farmers' Union, a private enterprise, started in a very humble way, has within 60 years grown into a mighty organization, one of the best of its type in the whole world. It is a challenge and an encouragement for us in India.

### *How it Started*

The Belgian Farmers' Union or Belgian Boerenbond (BB) originated at a time when Western Europe was going through an economic depression. Agriculture, in order to survive, had to undergo some fundamental changes in its technical and economic

structure.<sup>1</sup> From being extensive it had to become an intensive agriculture, through better farming and through the extension of agro-industrial and vegetable crops. The Belgian farmers, according to the rules drawn up during the Catholic Congresses of Liege (1886, 87, 90) and Mechlin (1889), took to the means of joining together into cooperatives, in order to protect their interests and improve their conditions. After the elections of 1884 Belgium got a Catholic Government which paid greater attention to agriculture, put up a Ministry of Agriculture and got ready to help the farmers in their efforts.

The idea of the BB<sup>2</sup> owes its origin to the Rev. J. F. Mellaerts, parish priest of Sint-Alfons-Goor, a little village near Mechlin.<sup>3</sup> He planned and framed the foundations of the local (1887) and central (1889) organization of the BB. Soon he asked and obtained the collaboration of Prof. J. Helleputte, engineer and F. Schollaert, a lawyer. It is this outstanding triumvirate of pioneers which stands at the origin of the organization that grew out into the big socio-economic

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<sup>1</sup> Could not the same be said of Indian Agriculture today?

<sup>2</sup> The Belgian Bcerenbond has directed its attention to and has mainly succeeded in the Flemish part of the country, which is not bigger than an average Indian District.

<sup>3</sup> We may presume that the Rev. J. F. Mellaerts, like any ordinary Indian parish priest, was not a "specialist" with master's degrees in Social and Economic Sciences, but simply a man who had studied intimately the problems of his people and who wanted to "do" something in the practical line. Therefore he applied for the two specialists who were to help him by their technical knowledge in the starting of the B.B.



complex, which aims at helping the farmers and horticulturists<sup>4</sup> in their religious, social, professional and economic interests.

### *How it grew up*

The BB did not attain all at once its present structure. As it looks today it is the result of many attempts and failures, of reorganization and adaptation to the particular needs of the period. But before all it is the result of the undaunted enthusiasm of the Flemish farmers and their far-sighted leaders, together with wise government help.

In spite of all failures and difficulties those farmers wanted to "stick together" in their efforts to improve themselves, and they gave their full confidence to the BB. That everything was not plain-sailing is seen from a bird's eye view of the development of the BB.

1890 — 1902 :- Time of great meetings in order to make the idea catch on and to set up local guilds. A monthly "The Farmer" is started in order to spread the idea among the farmers and to secure the contact between the central, the district, and the local Organizations. In order to alleviate the economic burdens of the farmers and to improve the yield of agriculture, a start is made with a Purchasing and Marketing Co-operative Society, an Insurance Company, an Office for Agricultural Credit (Raiffeisen system) and an Inspection Service.

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<sup>4</sup> Horticulturist: (Hovenier) means not only a gardener but a man who grows vegetables to sell them either in his own shop or in the open market.

1903 — 1914 :- Defects, arising from an excessive decentralization are remedied. More attention is given to social problems. "The Farmer" becomes a weekly. The Inspection Service is improved and sees to it that local guilds evolve methodically and in close contact with the central organization. A League for Farm Women and another for Horticulturists, a Dairy Department are started and the Insurance Company is extended.

1914 — 1918 :- Due to World War I most of the activities are either stopped or are working at a low tempo. Many farms and fields are destroyed during the fighting especially in West Flanders.

1919 — 1925 :- Period of reconstruction, especially of West Flanders. Adult education in agriculture, horticulture and house work is extended. The Information Bureau is also extended in order to give legal advice to the members. A marketing centre in Mechlin encourages and helps the members in producing and marketing more vegetables and fruits. A Seed Improvement Station is erected near Louvain. Near the harbour of Antwerp the Purchasing and Marketing Department of the BB sets up machinery for the manufacturing of cattle fodder.

1926 — 1934 :- Period of economic extension and welfare. A greater centralisation of all the services and departments into a "General Secretariate," situated in Louvain. The Young Farmers' Association and the League of Country Girls are recognized by the Belgian Bishops as organs of Catholic Action for the rural population. The Purchasing and Marketing Department takes up the disposal of eggs, and butter in some

of the big centres. An economic crisis in 1934 destroys various factories and enterprises connected with agriculture, in which the Credit Office had invested. This causes the latter to go bankrupt.

1935 — 1936 :- Year of transition. Reorganization of the Direction, reshaping of the Constitutions by the Union's Council. The Central Office for Agricultural Credit is also reorganized. A tendency to decentralize more is noticeable.

1936 — 1940 :- This reorganisation and reshuffling creates again a strong confidence on the part of the farmers in their BB and especially in the Central Office for Agricultural Credit.

1940 — 1944 :- World War II slows down many of the activities. The economic work is being distinguished more sharply from the social activities.

1945 — 1950 :- The BB makes light changes in the structure of the General Council of the Union, the Board of Directors and of the Executive Committee. During this period the national economy is gradually switched over from rigorism to a freer economy. In 1950 the BB has overcome the results of the war and works as intensely as before.

#### *How it is organized at present*

##### *(A) Local Organs : The Guilds.*

Farmers, market-gardeners, horticulturists, nursery men, grape growers etc. are grouped into municipal or parochial associations. The guild's committee is freely elected by the members. The parish priest is

the chaplain of the guild and also a member of the committee. The aim of the guild is to study and to further the religious, social, professional and economic interests of the members. Each local guild comprises a certain number of sections, each of them having its particular object. To mention but a few of these sections: The Section for collective Purchasing and Marketing, the Local Office for saving and Credit, the Syndicate of Cattle breeders, the Cooperative Dairy, the Mutual Insurance Company. There is a mutual representation of the guild's committee in the direction of these sections and of the sections in the guilds committee.

(B) *Regional Organs: District Federation of Agricultural Guilds.*

These federations are composed of the delegates, elected by the local guilds belonging to the same administrative district. The District Federations elect the delegates who will have a seat in the General Council of the Union. They have also to look to the realization of the aims of the BB as far as specifically regional interests are concerned.

(C) *The Central or Head Office.*

It has the same structure as the local guilds. The directing organs are :-

- (1) *The General Council of the Union:* which is a representative and advisory body. It is composed principally of the delegates, sent by the District Federations. (33 Persons)
- (2) *The Board of Directors:* is entrusted with the general management, it is composed of members

elected by the General Council, a certain number of co-opted members and the chairmen of the economic sections (13 Persons)

- (3) *The Executive Committee*: entrusted with the execution of the decisions of the Board of Directors, is composed of some members of the Board of Directors and a General Secretary. The General-Chaplain is appointed by the Belgian Bishops and is by right the member of the different managing organs.

*How this Organisation functions.*

The BB wants to solve the problems of Belgian agriculture according to Christian principles. Its activities are directed to the following ends:

1. To stimulate the spirit of cooperation among the peasantry.
2. To safeguard faith and morality among the farmers.
3. To improve their conditions of life and their social standing.
4. To popularize agricultural science.
5. To widen the vital space of the farmers.
6. To improve farming, growing and breeding methods technically and economically.
7. To study and defend the general interests of agriculture.

The aims of the BB thus cover all the interests of the members: as heads of families, as professional men, as citizens and as Christians.

In order to achieve these aims the BB has put up a number of central services corresponding to the sections of the local guilds.

(A) *Social Services :*

- (1) *The General Secretariate :* studies the religious, moral, social and professional problems of the members and looks after the strengthening and development of the whole BB. It also secures the technical and professional training of the members. It propagates cooperative ideas among them and publishes the various papers of the organization.
- (2) *The Inspection Department :* The inspectors form the connecting link between the central services and the local guilds. They stimulate the activity of the guilds, inspect the work of the different sections of the guilds and report on them. They also transmit their wishes to the Executive Committee. In technical matters they apply to the experts and specialists of the General Secretariate.
- (3) *League of Farm Women and League of Country Girls :* gathers and looks after the religious, social and technical training of the Farm Women of the local guilds. An outside service with female staff is at the disposal of the League, so that it may accomplish its mission.
- (4) *The Mutual Fund for Family Allowances :* It pays the allowances to the farmers and horticulturists, affiliated as independent workers, and to the wage-earners occupied by the members of the BB affiliated to that fund.
- (5) *Service of Social Aid :* Helps the members in the application of the social legislation and the observance of formalities concerning these matters.

- (6) *League of Rural Youth (BJB)* : The BJB is a real youth movement within the frame of the Catholic Action Movement and pursues a religious, cultural, social and technical activity among the rural youth. It works in close cooperation with the BB.

(B) *Economic Services* :

The economic activity of the BB is entrusted to a number of co-operative societies, closely connected with the Social activities of the BB.

- (1) *The Purchasing and Marketing Society of the BB* : This society produces fodder for great and small live stock. It purchases and sells for the marketing sections of the local guilds.
- (2) *The Insurance Company of the Belgian Boerenbond* : has its offices spread all over the country. It affords insurance against fire, accidents, storm, mortality of cattle etc.
- (3) *The Central Office for Agricultural Credit (Raiffeisen System)* : joins into a unity all the local Raiffeisen Offices, whose activities it controls and encourages. It executes financial business in their name, as far as the law allows.
- (4) *The Technical Services of the Belgian Boerenbond* : has been constituted as a cooperative society and it contains 5 sections.
  - a. *Rural Construction Section* : which studies and controls the building activities which are entrusted to it.

- b. Rural Hydraulics Section : furthers the reclamation of marshes and the improvement of water-logged areas.
- c. Agricultural Machinery Section : provides all the materials, implements and machines which are used in agriculture and horticulture.
- d. Electricity Section : studies and undertakes the gradual introduction of electricity in the rural areas as a source of power and light.
- e. Dairy Industry Section : sees to the planning, building and exploitation of dairy farms.

( to be continued )

*M. Van den Bogaert*

## WHAT IS CAPITALISM ?

When we talk about 'Capitalism', do we all mean the same thing ? When Leo XIII or Pius XI described the Capitalist system as not vicious of its very nature but a violator of right order under certain circumstances, what kind of an economic system had they in mind ? When a confirmed Communist talks in bitter language of bloated capitalists and their exploitation of the Proletariat, whom does he precisely mean ? Is the Capitalist system still alive or has it been so modified by both social and legislative pressures that it can hardly be said to exist today ? Has the advance of technology so transformed our methods of production that the Capitalist system is no longer required, or cannot function in its classic form ?



While it is difficult to pin-point the exact connotation of the word 'Capitalism', there are various shades of differences in the understanding of the term which is due both to changing economic circumstances and to diverse political and social outlooks. And these must first be grasped before any unified meaning can be ascribed to the word.

### *Feudalism and Capitalism*

In the Feudalistic society that preceded Capitalist society, the agonizing problems of low-paid labour, large-scale unemployment, periodic depressions, mass poverty and drudgery, as we know them now, scarcely existed. This does not imply that the Feudalistic society had no problems of its own, or was an idyllic social system. Even in Feudal times there was exploitation of the poor by the rich nobility, there were class distinctions more rigid than our own, there were the serfs, who were practically slaves. But with the discovery of the new worlds across the seas, the invention of machinery, the advance of science, the weakening of monarchic and oligarchic power, the old feudal system slowly crumbled away and in its place arose what we call the 'Capitalist' system.

Why were our modern problems comparatively non-existent in the Feudalistic society? The answer seems to lie in the fact that the Feudal system never implied the disjunction of capital and labour on a large scale as can be witnessed today, when comparatively few people possess capital, while the rest possess nothing at all, and therefore put their labour at the disposal of the capitalist to earn their living. In Feudal times, or for that matter even today you can find

a farmer and his family working on the land which they own. In this case it is their own capital and their own labour that they utilise to produce the harvest. They combine in their own persons both the owners of capital and the workers who give their labour, so that they have never to decide upon the question how to distribute the produce of the soil between their capital and their labour. But in a capitalist society the eternal wrangle between capital and labour for their share of the final product seems to be a decisive characteristic, one of the distinguishing marks, as it were, of the presence of Capitalism.

#### *What is Capital ?*

The term 'Capital' has a variety of meanings. It can be applied both to goods and to money. Normally it is reserved to signify goods which are used for the production of other goods, and the money that is borrowed to set the wheels of production in motion and keep them oiled. Money that goes to form capital can either be saved out of current consumption or be 'created' by the banks. In the modern world, capital accumulates generally to the advantage of the holders of capital. But as the scale of wages improves, it is quite possible for the wage earner to save up a part of his income and invest it in shares and thus become a holder of capital himself. But with the establishment of the capitalist system, the people who have come into prominence are the lenders of money, who loan out their money at interest, and practically control the entire system.

#### *A Definition of Capitalism*

In his 'Reorganisation of the Social Economy' pg. 270, Nell-Breuning quotes Paul Jostock's definition

of capitalism as suitably describing the system from both the economic and the social angles. According to Jostock, Capitalism is characterised by the three following requisites :

- (1) The system serves the purpose of gain by exchange.
- (2) Production is regulated by the co-operation of two groups bound by contract, one of which possesses all necessary goods, while the other possesses and contributes merely its personal labour.
- (3) The theoretical possibility that each of the two groups as an organising factor engages the other, and directs the course of production, according to its own law, is practically decided in favour of those possessing the capital.

Jostock therefore stresses the profit motive, the ownership of capital by the capitalist and the offer of his labour by the working man (the only thing he possesses) and finally the direction of production by the capitalist as being of the very essence of the capitalist system.

In his 'Social Ethics', pg. 817, Messner, before giving his definition of Capitalism, points out that 'a definition that can satisfy a scientific analysis of capitalism cannot be founded on ideological postulates but only on the findings of economic history and economic theory. He therefore rejects the two extreme definitions of Capitalism, viz. that of the Liberals, who conceive capitalism as an amalgam of the free play of forces and the harmony of interest, and that of the socialist theory, which sees in capitalism a system of

class domination and exploitation by the power of capital.

Messner finally defines Capitalism as 'that form of social economy in which capital interest, i.e. the profit motive, is the primary driving force of its process.' He continues, 'Capital profit is thereby made the immediate operative end of the economic effort whose essential end, however, is the satisfaction of the needs of the community. If the dynamic of the profit motive thus engendered is not made subservient to the essential end of social economy by institutions of social control, it must give rise to a social system unjustifiable in the light of this end, that is, morally.'

While Jostock's definition is the more inclusive and all-embracing, Messner stresses the profit motive as being the dynamic of the Capitalist system, and practically makes it the distinguishing mark of full-blooded capitalism. It is generally admitted that the profit motive should hold pride of place in the capitalist system and much of the beneficial consequences of Capitalism, like the rise in the standard of living, large-scale production, labour-saving devices, increase of production, are traceable to the entrepreneur's desire for a profit. But it must also be admitted that the profit motive is not the only criterion whereby the Capitalist system can be marked out from others. Men always work for personal motives, either to earn a living, or to support their families, or to exercise their spirit of creativeness or inventiveness, or to improve their status, both materially and socially. The desire for personal gain is present in every system, only that it takes different forms. In the Feudal system, men

strove for the advantages that went with rank and workmanship, while in the Communist countries, there is a struggle for bureaucratic power. In capitalist countries, there is the struggle for amassing wealth which can be most easily attained through the acquisition of profits, especially when the stakes are high. In this sense and only under this aspect, the profit motive can be considered a qualifying requisite for the presence of capitalism.

But the owning of capital by private individual capitalists must also be set down as an important aspect of the capitalist system. If the capitalists are expropriated and their capital transferred into the hands of the state, so that the state becomes the sole capitalist, it is not likely that this system will be described as capitalist. It might be called state capitalism but it would not be accepted as the Capitalist system as we normally understand the term. Private individual ownership is therefore an important element that cannot be left out of the definition.

### *Capitalism in the Encyclicals*

When the Popes condemn the abuses of Capitalism, what do they understand by the term? This is an important question since the Encyclicals are concerned with the moral bearings of the system, and some of their directives are binding in conscience.

Nowhere in the Encyclicals do the Popes give a definition of Capitalism, but they merely sketch the system in a few general terms, and denounce the evil effects of the system. Thus Pope Pius XI speaking of the changes that have in some way altered the economic system since the days of Leo XIII described what

Pope Leo had in mind when he had condemned the injustices of that '*economic regime in which capital and labour jointly needed for production were usually provided by different people.*'\* Thus it is only incidentally as it were, that the Pope states the essentials of the system we call 'Capitalist'.

A little further in the same Encyclical, the Pope says that 'it is true that even today this economic regime does not everywhere exist exclusively, for there is another regime which still embraces a very large and important group of men. There is for instance the agricultural class in which the larger portion of the human race provides itself with an honourable livelihood.' In these words, the limits of the Capitalist system as holding sway chiefly in industry is made evident. At least it is clear that the Pope is going to treat mainly of industrial capitalism.

One may therefore conclude that in the minds of the Popes, the Capitalist system may be said to exist when 'capital and labour jointly needed for production are usually provided for by different people.' If they are provided by the same person, then there is no problem, nor does the system exist. But with the world-wide diffusion of industry, adds Pope Pius XI, 'the capitalist economic regime has spread everywhere..... It has invaded and pervaded the economic and social circumstances even of those who live outside its ambit, effectively influencing them, and to some extent imposing on them its advantages, disadvantages and vices.'

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\* Quadragesimo Anno.

At the same time it is clear too that one of the basic essentials of Capitalism as understood by the Popes is that capital be owned by a private individual or a group of individuals. Of course Leo XIII especially describes the grievous abuses of private ownership of capital in his days, but at the same time he strenuously defends the right of private ownership against the socialists.

On the other hand, Pius XI speaks of the immense power and the despotic domination concentrated in the hands of a people who though they are only trustees and directors of invested funds, yet administer them at their own good pleasure. This was a characteristic of the capitalism of the thirties and is true even today in capitalist countries, despite legislative attempts to break up such concentrations of power through anti-trust acts.

To understand the papal condemnation of the abuses of the Capitalistic system, all these various references must be borne in mind.

### *Marxist Conception*

To the Marxist, Capitalism which is intrinsically evil, is based ultimately on the possession of the means of production by private individuals. The holders of capital use it to satisfy the needs of the market. They are impelled to do so by the sole purpose of making profit. Profits ultimately are obtained by fleecing the workmen who work for the capitalist. Marx shows how this is done through his theory of Surplus Value. At the same time however, because of the fierce competition that goes on continuously between the capi-

talists, their number is gradually reduced, till just a few of them rule with an iron hand over the vast numbers of the Proletariat. But ultimately the Proletariat will overthrow them to usher in the Millenium of equality and plenty. Thus for the Marxist, the characteristics of the Capitalist system would be the prevalence of private property, the profit motive, the competitive principle, and the division of society into two camps, the expropriators and the expropriated.

Marx's analysis of Capitalism may have been true of his days, but his prophecy regarding the utter breakdown of the system has not occurred. Instead with the legislative measures taken to break up large concentrations of wealth and protect the workmen, a wider distribution of capital is taking place and the standard of living of the workingmen has risen remarkably especially among the predominantly capitalist countries. In other words, modern capitalism has been shorn of some of the abuses that existed in Marx's days and roused his anger. On the contrary, Communism has become the grave of freedom.

### *Philosophical Bias*

Even considered as an economic system, Capitalism is deeply impregnated by the Liberalist philosophical outlook, which is thoroughly materialistic and individualistic, and is the real source of the evils of present day Capitalism. In the Liberal view, the Capitalist system requires complete freedom of competition and therefore no interference from the state in the hiring and firing of labour, the predominance of self-interest as exhibited in the profit motive, and the belief that when these requisites are present, the highest pro-



duction and the most equitable distribution will take place automatically. How dangerous and appalling have been the results of this false fundamental credo is amply proved by the frightful evils of mass poverty, hunger and unemployment, greed and cruelty let loose on the modern world.

### *Conclusion*

Amongst these varying definitions or conceptions of Capitalism, certain common elements can be picked out without much difficulty. Private property, the profit motive, the capitalists possessing all the capital, while their employees have nothing to offer except their labour, the directive power of the capitalists in choosing what to produce for the market, private initiative, all these are considered to be the requisites for the existence of a social and economic system that we term 'capitalist.' Can this system be defended on moral grounds?

Some people are inclined to think that the capitalist system has been so deeply poisoned by the Liberal outlook that the system must be scrapped altogether and a new social and economic system must take its place.

On the other hand, there are other who think perhaps a bit too naively that in the predominantly capitalistic countries of the world, capitalism has been so transformed and chastened that it scarcely resembles the sordid description of Marx. In its new dress, it should be welcomed with open arms, especially when there is no other alternative except Communism.

It is still true today that in many parts of the world the Liberal spirit pervades Capitalism. The fierce fight for wealth goes on unabated. The social aspects of ownership are still forgotten or slurred over. The attempts to harmonise relations between Capital and Labour through humane treatment, sympathy and understanding of the workingman's problems in industry, have only just begun. Even here constant squabbles arise between management and labour as to the sharing out of the earnings of the firm.

Can Capitalism get rid of the Liberal spirit? Until the Liberal spirit of self interest is replaced by the earnest seeking for the common good and the functional notion of service within a unified community, only then will the Capitalist system receive final acceptance at the hands of men who wish to preserve both freedom and justice in a humane society.

A. Fonseca

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Christian Doctrine* by V. Courtois. Calcutta, Oriental Institute, 30 Park Street, 1954. Pp. 198, 8 illustrat. Price : Rs. 2/-. Abridged edition As. 12/.

As a meritorious effort at inter-communal harmony, this book deserves warm recommendation. The author who is the Director of the Islamic Section of the Oriental Institute has met a fair number of Muslims desirous of a closer acquaintance with the Christian doctrine. It is for them that he composed the

present book in Catechetical style. He has well adapted his exposition to the intellectual make-up of a Muslim reader ; whilst avoiding any controversy, he took advantage of data common to Christianity and Islam, and went on with a full survey of Catholic doctrine and practice. Equally significant are the illustrations mostly taken from Persian artists.

The book is bound to be welcome by educated Muslims ; it calls for a similar book adapted to the mentality of educated Hindus.

A. L.

*From My China Diary.* By Brajkishore Shastri. Pp. 55. Delhi, Siddharta Publications Ltd, 35 Faiz Bazaar, 1954. Price Re. 1/-.

A realistic appreciation of China by a trade-union leader of the Praja Socialist Party, who saw what happens in a red country : training of youth, exploitation of women's labour, oppression of workers and peasants, etc. The preface explodes the fancy of a "coalition government existing in China."

To be noted also is the provision in the Chinese Constitution for parliamentary representation for the Chinese groups overseas. What of such Red foreign pockets in India ? Are they not more dangerous than others by being "racial pockets" instead of being territorial ?

A most readable, informative and reliable booklet that should help to focus Sino-Indian friendship.

A. L.

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## SOCIAL SURVEY

### *Bank Employees*

Towering above all social events, the intervention of the Government, suspending the effects of the Appellate Tribunal's Judgment in the matter of the Bank Employees's salary, invites everybody to consider the implications and the consequences of such a move. In 1953 this Review examined the consequences of the decision of the Appellate Tribunal. It was already a set-back for the Employees. A first award had been set aside at the demand of the Bankers on technical ground. The second has just been squashed by the government action. Useless to say that a campaign has been immediately started against the Government, accusing it of having surrendered to the dictate of the Bank Lords. It is easy to accuse politicians of being the creatures of Finance but less easy to prove it.

The reasons adduced by the Executive to step in were based on the fact that a Tribunal in giving a decision has to take into account only the immediate data of the case and has no right or power to place them in their larger surroundings. It is the government alone, which, with its knowledge of the wider issues, is able to do so ; and in some rare cases, as the present one, it has the duty to act, as it did.

People should not take such rare intervention as casting a slur on the prestige of the Tribunal. A Higher Court often invalidates the conclusions of a lower one, and nobody complains that it lowers the prestige of the inferior court. This may be true, but

simple people fear that once the door is opened, many other exceptions will follow. The country boor who answered Frederick the Great of Prussia "there are still judges at Berlin" meant that the Judicial Order is the supreme authority, even against the whims and fancies of a tyrant. Squabbles among legists do not matter much, they are family quarrels; but the coming of an outsider to settle the trouble gives rise to misgivings.

Dr. Ambedkar in his attack against the Government granted it the right of interference. The question may be pushed further; even if it is legal, is it just? The two terms, legality and justice, do not always cover the same ground. If the judgement of the Appellate Tribunal was just, and had marked out the minimum living wages of the employees, has the Executive the right, even to save superior and wider interests, to commit what ultimately is an injustice? If so, does it not seem to be a case of "the end justifies the means"?

But already 300 Banks have been closed all over the country. It is a deplorable fact, but it should not be brought without examining the conditions of the closures of those establishments? Certainly some of them belonged to the mushroom growth of banks after independence. People launched them hoping for quick returns without fathoming the possibilities of the country. Some of them were simply cheating institutions. Others came to grief on account of the reckless gambling of their Directors. The question which should be put is "How many closed on account of the salaries paid to their employees?"

It is true that the State has the right and the duty to protect the deposits of the investors. This right does not extend to the point of sacrificing the legitimate interests of the workers, and does not include the obligation of bringing profits to the shareholders. In banking business, as in any other business, there are tracks of desert to be crossed from time to time.

The figures given by Sri Sundarayya, M. L. A., tend to prove that the situation of the Banks does not require such a drastic remedy as the one contemplated by the Ministers.

The A Category has suffered, it is true, a fall in working capital of 10% and 11% in deposits for the period 1949/'53, but the gross profits have increased by 20% and the dividend given reached 8% as an average. The B. Category underwent a fall of 13% in working capital and deposits, but still has a gross profit of 9%. The C Category with a 12½% decrease in working capital and deposits, has increased its earnings and dividends. The last category, D, turns out to be the most prosperous and has an increase of capital, and of returns.

Despite those facts the new rules imposed by the Government, brings a cut of Rs. 7 to 65 to the employees. A new area category has been created for places having a population below 30,000, in which the Bankers will be totally exempted from the provisions of the minimum salary and D.A. 680 banks (45% of B class and 50% of C and D) will profit by the Government's decision. Sri Nehru pointed out that the salaries have been kept very close to those of the Award, and that if the D.A. have been touched, the effects of the Government's

measure will be suspended for a year. So for a year more the employees will not lose anything. This affirmation has been challenged in so far as gratuities, bonus, provident fund will be affected immediately.

Even granted that the status quo is, for a short period, kept, or nearly so, nobody will deny that the principle of differentiating emoluments according to differences in capital of the banks is not the ideal one. To equal work should correspond equal salary, in the same town. If the salary was proportioned to work, the employee in small banks should even get more, since he is in the position of a Jack-of-all-trades.

Dr. Ambedkar showed that if the difference of capital is at the bottom of differentiating salaries, the Imperial Bank with its 218 crores of capital should be more generous than the bankers with only Rs. 25 crores of capital.

It is true that Sri Nehru made an appeal to the goodwill of the bankers to pay their employees over and above the minimum imposed by the Government's decision. If any one acts according to the suggestion of the Pundit, he should receive, next anniversary of the Independence day, one of the highest rewards bestowed by the State. But it should be only on humanitarian grounds and not to hush up certain revelations about the business of the bank.

In the whole discussion, employees challenged the figures given by the bankers and complained that after submitting their own they were asked to supply new data within 24 hours, which was beyond their possibilities. They supplied information showing that many

of the Directors cashed between Rs. 6,500 to Rs. 7,500 free of income-tax, and Hiren Mukerjee affirmed that one manager got Rs. 21,834 a month for his job.

Pundit Nehru confessed that he had not realized the extent of the salary of the Directors. He recommended patience to the employees and goodwill to the employers, and wound up the proceedings by affirming that nothing was yet finalized, that things will be considered more fully. He relied for the technical part on the competence of Sri Deshmukh who affirmed that, with the modern banking system in India still in its infancy, special protection and help were needed. The employees harped on the slogan of justice, fair wage, and sent telegrams of congratulation to V. V. Giri for having severed his connection with the Government. They spoke of a general strike. Let us hope that the common sense of both parties, employers and employees, will find a way out.

E. Gathier

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### *Important Notice*

*From January 1955*

## **SOCIAL ACTION**

*will have a larger number of pages,  
several new features and a new editor.*

**The subscription rate for 1955 will be  
raised to Rs. 6 per year or  
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